

# EDEN



*Eden Environmental Citizen's Group, LLC*

September 7, 2019

Via US Mail, Certified USPS Tracking No. 7018 0360 0000 8017 7217

Steve Cousins CEO  
Armida Winery  
2201 Westside Road  
Healdsburg, CA 95448

**Re: 60-Day Notice of Violations and Intent to File Suit Under the Federal  
Water Pollution Control Act ("Clean Water Act")**

To Officers, Directors, Operators, Property Owners and/or Facility Managers of Armida Winery:

I am writing on behalf of Eden Environmental Citizen's Group ("EDEN") to give legal notice that EDEN intends to file a civil action against Armida Winery and its corporate officers ("Discharger") for violations of the Federal Clean Water Act ("CWA" or "Act") 33 U.S.C. § 1251 *et seq.*, that EDEN believes are occurring at the Armida Winery facility located at 2201 Westside Road in Healdsburg, California ("the Facility" or "the site").

EDEN is an environmental citizen's group established under the laws of the State of California to protect, enhance, and assist in the restoration of all rivers, creeks, streams, wetlands, vernal pools, and tributaries of California, for the benefit of its ecosystems and communities.

CWA section 505(b) requires that sixty (60) days prior to the initiation of a civil action under CWA section 505(a), a citizen must give notice of intent to file suit. 33 U.S.C. § 1365(b) Notice must be given to the alleged violator, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA"), and the State in which the violations occur.

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2151 Salvio Street #A2-319  
Telephone: 925-732-0960  
Website:

Concord, CA 94520



Email: [edenenvcitizens@gmail.com](mailto:edenenvcitizens@gmail.com)

**[edenenvironmental.org](http://edenenvironmental.org)**

As required by CWA section 505(b), this Notice of Violation and Intent to File Suit provides notice to the Discharger of the violations which have occurred and continue to occur at the Facility. After the expiration of sixty (60) days from the date of this Notice of Violation and Intent to File Suit, EDEN intends to file suit in federal court against the Discharger under CWA section 505(a) for the violations described more fully below.

## **I. THE SPECIFIC STANDARD, LIMITATION, OR ORDER VIOLATED**

EDEN's investigation of the Facility has uncovered significant, ongoing, and continuous violations of the CWA and the General Industrial Storm Water Permit issued by the State of California (NPDES General Permit No. CAS000001 [State Water Resources Control Board ("SWRCB")] Water Quality Order No. 92-12-DWQ, as amended by Order No. 97-03-DWQ ("1997 Permit") and by Order No. 2014-0057-DWQ ("2015 Permit") (collectively, the "General Permit").

Information available to EDEN, including documents obtained from California EPA's online Storm Water Multiple Application and Reporting Tracking System ("SMARTS") and the California Secretary of State, indicates that Armida Winery has not submitted a Notice of Intent ("NOI") to be authorized to discharge storm water from the Facility.

As more fully described in Section III, below, EDEN alleges that in its operations of the Facility, the Discharger has committed ongoing violations of the substantive and procedural requirements of the Federal Clean Water Act, California Water Code §13377; the General Permit, the Regional Water Board Basin Plan, the California Toxics Rule (CTR) 40 C.F.R. § 131.38, and California Code of Regulations, Title 22, § 64431.

## **II. THE LOCATION OF THE ALLEGED VIOLATIONS**

### **A. The Facility**

The location of the point sources from which the pollutants identified in this Notice are discharged in violation of the CWA is Armida Winery's permanent facility address of 2201 Westside Road in Healdsburg, California. Armida Winery produces Wine at its Facility. Facility Operations are covered under Standard Industrial Classification Code (SIC) 2084.

Based on EPA's Industrial Storm water Fact Sheet for Sector U – Food and Kindred Products Facilities, polluted discharges from food plants such as the Facility contain pH affecting substances; total suspended solids ("TSS"); Biochemical Oxygen Demand ("BOD"), gasoline and diesel fuels; miscellaneous insecticides, rodenticides, pesticides; and oil and grease ("O&G"). Many of these pollutants are on the list of chemicals published by the State of California as known to cause cancer, birth defects, and/or developmental or reproductive harm.

Information available to EDEN indicates that the Facility's industrial activities and associated materials are exposed to storm water, and that each of the substances listed on the EPA's Industrial Storm Water Fact Sheet is a potential source of pollutants at the Facility.

**B. The Affected Receiving Waters**

The Facility discharges into a municipal storm drain system, which then discharges to Dry Creek, which flows to the Russian River ("Receiving Waters").

The Russian River is a water of the United States. The CWA requires that water bodies such as the Russian River meet water quality objectives that protect specific "beneficial uses." The Regional Water Board has issued the *North Coast Region Basin Water Quality Control Plan* ("Basin Plan") to delineate those water quality objectives.

The Basin Plan identifies the "Beneficial Uses" of water bodies in the region. The Beneficial Uses for the Receiving Waters downstream of the Facility include sport fishing, fish migration, navigation, preservation of rare and endangered species, water contact and noncontact recreation, fish spawning, and wildlife habitat. Contaminated storm water from the Facility adversely affects the water quality of the Russian River watershed and threatens the beneficial uses and ecosystem of this watershed.

Furthermore, the Russian River is listed for water quality impairment on the most recent 303(d)-list for sediment and temperature. Portions of the Russian River watershed are impaired for dissolved oxygen, mercury, bacteria, temperature and pathogen impairments.

Polluted storm water and non-storm water discharges from industrial facilities, such as the Facility, contribute to the further degradation of already impaired surface waters, and harm aquatic dependent wildlife.

**III. VIOLATIONS OF THE CLEAN WATER ACT AND GENERAL PERMIT**

**A. Failure to Apply for NPDES Coverage**

The CWA prohibits storm water discharges without a permit. 33 U.S.C. § 1342; 40 C.F.R. § 122.26. The General Permit regulates operators of facilities subject to coverage under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) storm water permit, as these operators discharge storm water associated with specific industrial activities identified by both industrial activity and SIC (Standard Industrial Classification) codes in Attachment A of the Permit.

The Discharger's primary industrial activity is listed on Attachment A as an industrial activity subject to NPDES coverage. Thus, the facility was required to apply for coverage under the Permit in order to commence business operations, pursuant to Section I.Q of the Permit.

According to California Secretary of State records, Armida Winery commenced its operations at the site on or about October 10. 1991.

Armida Winery did not in fact apply for coverage under the 1997 or 2015 California Industrial General Permits. Thus, between at least October 10. 1991, and the present, the Facility has operated without NDPEs Permit coverage. During that time, the Facility did not comply with any of the terms of the Permit, including implementing Best Management Practices, collecting and analyzing storm water runoff for pollution parameters, preparing and implementing a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan, or filing Annual Reports.

Permit noncompliance constitutes a violation of the Clean Water Act and the Water Code, is grounds for enforcement action against the Facility and is further a violation of Sections I and II.B.1.b. of the General Permit.

Section II.B.5 provides that "New Dischargers registering for NOI coverage on or after July 1, 2015 shall certify and submit PRDs via SMARTS at least seven (7) days prior to commencement of industrial activities or on July 1, 2015, whichever comes later."

**B. Failure to Implement a SWPPP and Site Map**

The Discharger has not implemented a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan ("SWPPP") for the Facility which complies with the requirements of the General Permit as specified in Section X of Order No. 2014-0057-DWQ.

Failure to develop or implement an adequate SWPPP is a violation of Sections II.B.4.f and X of the General Permit.

**C. Failure to Implement a Monitoring and Sampling Program**

**1. Failure to Conduct Visual Observations**

Section XI(A) of the General Permit requires all Dischargers to conduct visual observations at least once each month, and sampling observations at the same time sampling occurs at a discharge location.

Observations must document the presence of any floating and suspended material, oil and grease, discolorations, turbidity, odor and the source of any pollutants. Dischargers must document and maintain records of observations, observation dates, locations observed, and responses taken to reduce or prevent pollutants in storm water discharges.

EDEN alleges that between July 1, 2015, and the present, the Discharger has failed to conduct monthly and sampling visual observations pursuant to Section XI(A) of the General Permit.

2. Failure to Collect and Analyze the Required Number of Storm Water Samples

In addition, EDEN alleges that the Discharger has failed to provide the Regional Water Board with the minimum number of annual documented results of facility run-off sampling as required under Sections XI.B.2 and XI.B.11.a of Order No. 2014-0057-DWQ, in violation of the General Permit and the CWA.

Section XI.B.2 of the General Permit requires that all Dischargers collect and analyze storm water samples from two Qualifying Storm Events (“QSEs”) within the first half of each reporting year (July 1 to December 31), and two (2) QSEs within the second half of each reporting year (January 1 to June 30).

Section XI.C.6.b provides that if samples are not collected pursuant to the General Permit, an explanation must be included in the Annual Report.

As of the date of this Notice, the Discharger has failed to upload into the SMARTS database system *any* storm water runoff sample collection analyses.

***D. Failure to File Annual Reports***

Armida Winery has failed to comply with Section XVI.A of the General Permit, which provides as follows: “The Discharger shall certify and submit via SMARTS an Annual Report no later than July 15th following each reporting year using the standardized format and checklists in SMARTS.”

Armida Winery’s Annual Report for the reporting years 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 were due on or before July 15, of each reporting year. However, Armida Winery has failed to file all Annual Reports as of the date of this Notice.

***E. Deficient BMP Implementation***

Sections I.C, V.A and X.C.1.b of the General Permit require Dischargers to identify and implement minimum and advanced Best Management Practices (“BMPs”) that comply with the Best Available Technology (“BAT”) and Best Conventional Pollutant Control Technology (“BCT”) requirements of the General Permit to reduce or prevent discharges of pollutants in their storm water discharge in a manner that reflects best industry practice, considering technological availability and economic practicability and achievability.

EDEN alleges that Armida Winery has been conducting industrial activities at the site without adequate BMPs to prevent resulting non-storm water discharges. Non-storm water discharges resulting from these activities are not from sources that are listed among the authorized non-storm water discharges in the General Permit, and thus are always prohibited.

Armida Winery's failure to develop and/or implement adequate BMPs and pollution controls to meet BAT and BCT at the Facility violates and will continue to violate the CWA and the Industrial General Permit each day the Facility discharges storm water without meeting BAT and BCT.

***F. Discharges in Violation of the General Permit***

Except as authorized by Special Conditions of the General Permit, Discharge Prohibition III(B) prohibits permittees from discharging materials other than storm water (non-storm water discharges) either directly or indirectly to waters of the United States. Unauthorized non-storm water discharges must be either eliminated or permitted by a separate NPDES permit.

Information available to EDEN indicates that unauthorized non-storm water discharges occur at the Facility due to inadequate BMP development and/or implementation necessary to prevent these discharges.

EDEN alleges that the Discharger has discharged storm water containing excessive levels of pollutants from the Facility to its Receiving Waters during at least every significant local rain event over 0.1 inches in the last five (5) years.

EDEN hereby puts the Discharger on notice that each time the Facility discharges prohibited non-storm water in violation of Discharge Prohibition III.B of the General Permit is a separate and distinct violation of the General Permit and Section 301(a) of the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1311(a).

Armida Winery may have had other violations that can only be fully identified and documented once discovery and investigation have been completed. Hence, to the extent possible, EDEN includes such violations in this Notice and reserves the right to amend this Notice, if necessary, to include such further violations in future legal proceedings.

**IV. THE PERSON OR PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE VIOLATIONS**

The entities responsible for the alleged violations are Armida Winery, as well as its corporate officers and employees of the Facility responsible for compliance with the CWA.

## **V. THE DATE, DATES, OR REASONABLE RANGE OF DATES OF THE VIOLATIONS**

The range of dates covered by this 60-day Notice is from at least September 1, 2014, to the date of this Notice. EDEN may from time to time update this Notice to include all violations which may occur after the range of dates covered by this Notice. Some of the violations are continuous in nature; therefore, each day constitutes a violation.

## **VI. CONTACT INFORMATION**

The entity giving this 60-day Notice is Eden Environmental Citizen's Group "EDEN").

EDEN has retained counsel in this matter:

Paul J. Warner  
Paul Warner Law  
P.O. Box 4755  
Arcata, CA 95518  
Telephone: (707) 825-7725  
Email: [pjwlaw@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pjwlaw@sbcglobal.net)

To ensure proper response to this Notice, all communications should be addressed to EDEN's legal counsel, Mr. Paul Warner.

## **IV. RELIEF SOUGHT FOR VIOLATIONS OF THE CLEAN WATER ACT**

CWA §§ 505(a)(1) and 505(f) provide for citizen enforcement actions against any "person," including individuals, corporations, or partnerships, for violations of NPDES permit requirements and for un-permitted discharges of pollutants. 33 U.S.C. §§ 1365(a)(1) and (f), §1362(5).

Pursuant to Section 309(d) of the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1319(d), and the Adjustment of Civil Monetary Penalties for Inflation, 40 C.F.R. § 19.4, each separate violation of the Clean Water Act subjects the violator to a penalty for all violations occurring during the period commencing five (5) years prior to the date of the Notice Letter. **These provisions of law authorize civil penalties of \$37,500.00 per day per violation for all Clean Water Act violations after January 12, 2009, and \$51,570.00 per day per violation for violations that occurred after November 2, 2015.**

In addition to civil penalties, EDEN will seek injunctive relief preventing further violations of the Clean Water Act pursuant to Sections 505(a) and (d), 33 U.S.C. § 1365(a) and (d), declaratory relief, and such other relief as permitted by law.

**Lastly, pursuant to Section 505(d) of the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1365(d) and California Code of Civil Procedure §1021.5, EDEN will seek to recover its pre and post-litigation costs, including all attorneys' and experts' fees and costs incurred** (see *Southern California Alliance of Publicly Owned Treatment Works v. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency* (9<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2017) 853 F.3d 1076; *Vasquez v. State of California* (2008) 45 Cal.4th 243).

## V. CONCLUSION

The CWA specifically provides a 60-day notice period to promote resolution of disputes. EDEN encourages Armida Winery's counsel to contact **EDEN's counsel** within 20 days of receipt of this Notice to initiate a discussion regarding the violations detailed herein. Please do not contact EDEN directly.

During the 60-day notice period, EDEN is willing to discuss effective remedies for the violations; however, if Armida Winery wishes to pursue such discussions in the absence of litigation, it is suggested those discussions be initiated soon so that they may be completed before the end of the 60-day notice period. EDEN reserves the right to file a lawsuit if discussions are continuing when the notice period ends.

Very truly yours,



AIDEN SANCHEZ

Eden Environmental Citizen's Group

### Copies to:

Andrew Wheeler: [wheeler.andrew@Epa.gov](mailto:wheeler.andrew@Epa.gov)  
Administrator, US Environmental Protection Agency

Mayumi Okamoto, Office of Enforcement:  
[Mayumi.Okamoto@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:Mayumi.Okamoto@waterboards.ca.gov)  
[stormwater@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:stormwater@waterboards.ca.gov)

State Water Resources Control Board  
Eileen Sobeck, Executive Director  
[eileen.sobeck@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:eileen.sobeck@waterboards.ca.gov)

Regional Administrator, U.S. EPA – Region 9  
Jennifer Pierce: [pierce.jennifer@epa.gov](mailto:pierce.jennifer@epa.gov)  
Laurie Kermish: [kermish.Laurie@epa.gov](mailto:kermish.Laurie@epa.gov)